also been requested to take suitable measures to combat the circulation of Bhutanese currency.

Patent Amendment Bill

525. SHRI YELLAIAH NANDI :
LT. GEN. (RETD.) PRAKASH MANI TRIPATHI :
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the fate of the controversial Patent Law (Amendment) Bill 1995 is still hanging in the balance;

(b) whether the patents are vital aspects of the global pharma industry and the patent protection is essential to spur basic research and development and make it commercially viable; and

(c) if so, the reasons for not introducing Patent (Amendment) Bill in the House?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) With the dissolution of the Tenth Lok Sabha, the Patents (Amendment) Bill, 1995 has lapsed.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Government is in the process of holding wide consultations on the subject to arrive at a consensus in this regard.

Minar Project in Delhi

526. SHRI MOHAN RAWALE : Will the Minster of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the SCOPE raised funds from Public Sector Undertakings to fund the 'Minar Project' at Laxmi Nagar district complex in East Delhi;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the estimated cost of the project;

(d) the amount spent on the Project and progress made so far in its construction;

(e) the reasons for overrun in the cost and time;

(f) whether responsibility has been fixed in this regard;

(g) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto; and

(h) by when the 'MINAR PROJECT' is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) and (b) : The Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE) has collected Rs. 168.99 crores till date from 41 constituents to whom space has been alloted in the 'Minar Project' at Laxmi Nagar District Complex in East Delhi.

(c) The project cost which was estimated at Rs. 74.38 crores in 1986 was revised from time to time and in February, 1996 it was estimated at Rs. 183.25 crores.

(d) An amount of Rs. 151.72 crores has been spent so far on this project. The civil and structural work of the project is almost completed except some finishing works which are dependent on the completion of works of service contractors and the physical progress of the work of these contractors is approximately 60%.

(e) The cost and time overruns in the project were due to various reasons such as delay in mobilisation of funds from constituents; delay in handing over full site, clearance of barracks and approval of building plans by the Delhi Development Authority; initially non-availability of space for dumping excavated earth; non-availability of steel reinforcement; delay in availability of construction power from Delhi Electric Supply Undertaking (Now Delhi Vidyut Board); closure of Badarpur mines; various agitations, strikes, etc.; slowdown of work by contractors and invoking arbitration; abandonment of work by Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning - HVAC contractor due to order of closure by the Hon'ble High Court; raising unacceptable claims by services contractors; non-availability of working fronts to various agencies; etc.

(f) No responsibility has been fixed.

(g) The question relates to a project being executed by an organisation, namely SCOPE, registered under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860 and, therefore, is not directly the concern of the Government.

(h) The projet is likely to be completed by April, 1998 and commissioned by October, 1998.

Trips Expert Group in a Mess

527. SHRI ANANT GUDHE : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the news item "Trips Expert Group in a mess as key members opt out" as appeared in the Financial Express dated October 14, 1997;

(b) if so, the facts of the news item; and

(c) the action taken/proposed to be taken by the Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BULLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The matter is being considered by the Government.